



January 2015



# **Iowa Core**

# **Annual Report**

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Grimes State Office Building  
400 E. 14<sup>th</sup> Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146

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## INTRODUCTION

One central component of a great school system is a clear set of expectations, or standards, that educators help all students reach. In Iowa, that effort is known as the Iowa Core.

The Iowa Core represents our statewide academic standards, which describe what students should know and be able to do in math, science, English language arts, and social studies. The Iowa Core also addresses 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills such as financial and technology literacy.

These state standards provide Iowa students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders with a clear, common understanding of what students are expected to learn at every grade level, regardless of where they live.

The standards establish what Iowa students need to learn, but not how to teach. Local schools and teachers continue to create lesson plans and tailor instruction to fit the needs of their students.

Senate File 245 (May 2005) and Senate File 588 (May 2007) established the voluntary Model Core Curriculum in kindergarten through grade 12 in the areas of literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and 21st century skills. The 2008 legislature proposed that the Iowa Core Curriculum be fully implemented by all Iowa schools — public and accredited nonpublic. The governor signed Senate File 2216 into law May 1, 2008, which requires the full implementation of the Iowa Core — in high schools by 2012-2013, and in K-8 by 2014-2015. Implementation plans were required for high schools by July 1, 2010, and by K-8 schools by July 1, 2012.

## CURRENT STATUS

The Iowa Department of Education (DE) is currently working with all area education agencies (AEAs) to support Iowa Core implementation with local schools districts and accredited nonpublic schools. Funds provided by the legislature in 2013 have been used for two primary purposes. First, the funds were used to maintain the Iowa Core Network, which consists of teams from each AEA that provide ongoing support and professional development to schools.

Improved implementation was one of the focus areas of the Iowa Core Network. The Iowa Core Network assisted local education agencies (LEAs) in initiating and sustaining efforts to address the six outcomes of the Iowa Core:

1. School leaders build and sustain system capacity to implement the Iowa Core.
2. Community members and other supporting agencies work together to support the implementation of the Iowa Core.
3. A continuous improvement process to improve teaching and learning is used at the district and school level.
4. District leaders and other educators monitor and use data to increase the degree of alignment of each and every student's enacted curriculum and other relevant educational opportunities to the Iowa Core.
5. Educators engage in professional development focused on improving instruction and deepening educators' knowledge of the standards and essential concepts and skills of the Iowa Core.
6. Educators implement effective instructional practices to ensure high levels of learning for each and every student.

The DE also used the legislative appropriation to update the Iowa Core website. Included in this update was providing access to reviewed instructional resources that are optional for educators to use that support Iowa Core implementation, as well as resources for parents and community members to support Iowa Core implementation.

## MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

In 2013-2014, approximately 89 Phase One schools, representing 10% of Iowa youth from preschool to grade 6, began implementation of MTSS. This included:

- (1) Implementation of Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs) and Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST), Iowa's state supported universal screening for prekindergarten, and kindergarten through sixth grade students, respectively;
- (2) Implementation of FAST progress monitoring assessments and interventions to support learning for students who are not at benchmark, K-3;
- (3) Access and use of Iowa TIER, Iowa's data system that allows easy access to student universal screening and progress monitoring assessment administration and results;
- (4) Access to monthly coaching webinars to provide just-in-time implementation support; and
- (5) Implementation of collaborative inquiry within leadership teams.

A critical change in implementation occurred in 2013-2014. Funds were appropriated for IAC 281-62, Iowa Code §279.68 – part of the law requirements includes district implementation of universal screening and progress monitoring for students in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Given this requirement, efforts appropriately shifted from 10 percent of schools, to statewide implementation of K-3 assessments.

By 2014, nearly all Iowa's districts benefitted from beginning implementation of MTSS focused on Iowa Core early literacy. Approximately three hundred and five [305] public districts and 43 non-public schools for a total of 634 total schools (public and non-public) implemented FAST universal screening assessments fall, 2014. This translates into approximately 161,297 students tested across public and non-public schools.

In 2014-2015, the focus is on continued support of the initially identified schools, as well as implementation across over 90% of schools. For Phase One schools, this means continued access and training on Iowa TIER, IGDIs and FAST, monthly coach webinars, training and support for coaches and leadership teams on collaborative inquiry and related materials, and first access to all training and materials related to MTSS. For all schools, this means access and training to Iowa TIER, IGDIs and FAST, as well as access to MTSS materials.

Approximately \$127,550 dollars supported Iowa Core early literacy professional development and learning around:

- Iowa TIER, FAST, and IGDIs
- Access to and support through the statewide coaching network
- Training and support for:
  - Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework;
  - Leadership and Consensus building;

Common continuous improvement process.

## OTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

An Iowa Core Statewide Resources Moodle site, developed by the Iowa Core Network, serves as a repository of resources for all Iowa educators to use in successfully implementing the Iowa Core. Included on the site are research briefs and literature reviews, professional development protocols, video segments, discussion guides, and organized learning sequences. Information and resources including podcast, video tutorials, online modules, and additional collaborative learning team professional development learning sequences and agendas will continue to be added to the site as they are developed. Many of these resources were developed with the support of the National Staff Development Council, Iowa Public Television, and numerous Iowa K-16 administrators and teachers.

District-based collaborative learning teams consisting of teachers and administrators are using these materials to deepen their understanding of their Iowa Core and to identify ways to improve instruction.

## STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

The DE has tasked a Comprehensive Balanced Assessment System Advisory Committee to provide advice and recommendations to the DE and the State Board of Education on policy and practice issues related to current and future assessment systems in Iowa. The also facilitated the Assessment Task Force, with the task force's report delivered to the legislature for the beginning of the 2015 legislative session.

The English Language Proficiency Assessments 21 (ELPA21) is being developed by a consortium of 12 states. The consortium is developing new English language proficiency standards and assessments to support English language learners engaged in the content of the Iowa Core. These new assessments will assess reading, writing, speaking, and listening around content standards from English language arts, mathematics, and science. The assessments will be for grades K-12 and will be operational in the 2015 -16 school year.

The integration of the CCSS into the Iowa Core requires Iowa to develop a new Iowa Alternate Assessment aligned to the Iowa Core. To accomplish this, Iowa joined [Dynamic Learning Maps](#) (DLM), a 14-state member consortium. The DLM assessment consortium is guided by the core belief that all students should have access to challenging grade-level content, which is reflected in the Iowa Core Essential Elements. The essential elements are specific statements of the content and skills that are linked to the grade level specific expectations for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

## CONTENT LEADERSHIP TEAMS

The DE is also collaborating with the AEAs in delivering a series of professional development opportunities called "Investigating the Iowa Core: Mathematics and Literacy" and "Deeper Investigations: Literacy and Mathematics". The purpose for the investigations is to teach administrators and teachers how to navigate the standards documents, learning the structure and content, and developing a deeper understanding of the changes in instruction and content these new standards require. Training of these professional development modules is being delivered throughout the state to teams of teachers and administrators. Each AEA is responsible for delivery at the local level. For educators who are unable to attend a face-to-face

investigation or for educators who may be new to the districts, these professional development opportunities are also available as online modules.

These content leadership teams are also involved in developing new professional learning opportunities for teachers to deepen their understanding of the standards and support improved instruction in these content areas.

## ONLINE TOOLS

The DE has teamed with the Mid-Iowa School Improvement Consortium (MISIC) to gain the rights for all school districts and accredited nonpublic schools in Iowa to have access to StandardsInsight, a tool that has “unpacked” the content and skills of Iowa Core State Standards. Three webinars are available at <http://misiciowa.org/StandardsInsight.html>. One webinar provides information to district and school administrators on how to access the tool, another assists teachers in the use of the StandardsInsight tool, and a third suggests uses for the tool. This website also includes a document called *An Educator’s Guide to StandardsInsight*.

The DE has also teamed with the AEA system to provide a web-based teacher reflection tool called the Iowa Curriculum Alignment Toolkit (I-CAT). The I-CAT lets teachers reflect on how their instruction aligns with the Iowa Core, and to collaborate with each other around visual displays of information to help teachers meet the learning needs of their students.